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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

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EDITORIAL LETTER.

TO THE READERS:

We have a matter of unusual interest and importance to present this month. There is among us today a widespread recognition of the fact that a better historical and practical knowledge of the Bible is an imperative need of the Christian church; and there is also an enthusiastic desire, even a purpose, on the part of multitudes of intelligent people to obtain this knowledge. The means by which this better understanding of the Bible can be realized have been growing rapidly during the past ten years. There are now many good books and periodicals which present the results of the best recent scholarship concerning the Bible; and there are many persons who have made a careful historical, literary, and religious study of the Scriptures—ministers, teachers, college graduates, and private Bible students—who are ready to communicate to others what they have themselves gained from their labors.

The time seems ripe for a general and well-organized advance in the study of the Bible. We therefore welcome the proposal of the COUNCIL OF SEVENTY which may be read in another portion of this issue (pp. 379–80). No better plan could be devised for calling attention to the need, and for arousing persons to active work, than this of having a “Bible-study Sunday” at the beginning of the school year. It will focus the interest and form a starting-point for real achievement.

The pastor will on this occasion explain to his people the necessity of a larger, better knowledge and use of the Bible,

and the grand opportunity which is now offered those who will undertake to meet this need. He will acquaint himself with the best books, the best periodicals, and the best guides in Bible study, so that the work done may be as true and as successful as possible. He will awaken enthusiasm for the study, and will organize those who desire to take it up. He will himself direct the Bible study of his people, in the Sunday school, and in weekday classes, or he will provide some other competent and energetic person.

We bespeak for this movement the hearty and conscientious coöperation of every pastor in America. We all of us desire a revival of religion which shall sweep over this country and exalt the cause of Christ, which shall bring countless men and women of noble lives and genuine devotion to humanity into active fellowship with our churches, and which shall stir the Christians within the churches to a higher type of living and a more self-sacrificing service to mankind. Is there any more likely way to induce such a religious awakening than to bring multitudes to the devout and earnest study of the Bible itself? The purpose of such a study on the part of the people should not be—will not be—to acquaint themselves with critical discussions concerning the Bible, or with the varying interpretations of the Bible. The purpose rather must be to understand the Bible, to learn what it teaches, and to gain from it the inspiration to live the life which it presents as God's ideal for men.

It is well that this plan for a "Bible-study Sunday" has been proposed so early, for it deserves the thought, prayer, and effort of all who have at heart the welfare of Christianity, who believe that Jesus is the light of the world, and that his gospel is a divine message to men. Let us show our reverence for the Bible by knowing it better and living it more fully.

In the March number (p. 163) some suggestions were made concerning a complete index to the BIBLICAL WORLD, and we asked whether there were three hundred subscribers who wished such an index at the price of one dollar a copy, estimating that about this amount would be required to meet the cost of publication. Fifty persons have written to us that they

would like the index. Many of these have said that an index was a necessity, and have urged that, if enough subscriptions were not received at the first call, a second call should be made. Some have written that they would rather purchase two copies than have the plan fail. One faithful friend of our journal, a man of experience in indexing work, has even made the generous offer to prepare the copy for this index with no other reward than that of performing a service to the great cause of Bible study. In view of these things, we think it is simple duty to go forward with the preparation of the index. But before undertaking the expense of its publication we shall need to receive more—if possible, two hundred more—subscriptions for the work, in reply to this second presentation of the matter. Please address such subscriptions, without unnecessary delay, to the editors of the BIBLICAL WORLD.

We feel that it would greatly inspire and benefit our readers if they would acquaint themselves with the recent book by Dr. George Matheson, entitled *Studies of the Portrait of Christ*,¹ which has within a year gone through four editions. It is primarily a devotional work, a deep, absorbing soul-meditation upon the picture of Jesus as the gospels portray him. We do not enough realize Christ to ourselves; the contemplation of his divine teaching, his exalted life, his calm and persuasive spirit, is not as common as it should be. Dr. Matheson's book will help all to this fuller knowledge and appreciation of Jesus. The treatment of the life is broadly chronological, and a second volume will later complete the work.

THE EDITORS.

¹ Published by Messrs. A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, 1899; pp. x + 326; \$1.75.